

# The Left Wing Answers

By I. E. Ferguson

**M**OST of the objections to the Left Wing, offered by the Reformist Socialists, are simply subterfuges to distract from the real issues. But undoubtedly there are some who take these objections seriously, and this stands in the way of their study and understanding of the vital differences between Reformist and Revolutionary Socialism. In order to clear these side-issues out of the way, and to compel the critics of the Left Wing to meet the real issues, we make answer to the most common objections.

**Objection:** The Left Wing seeks to destroy the unity of the Party on account of a quarrel of phrases.

**Answer:** The progress of history has exploded a fake unity within the Socialist ranks of all countries. This was a unity of phrases, a unity having no more fundamental basis than agreement on reform politics within the scheme of capitalist democracy. Beyond this, some of the phrases of the class struggle, and more or less insistence that the political party of the working class must stand by itself.

The Left Wing seeks to create a real unity on the basis of the true Socialist program, a unity of understanding and of action. Such is the unity of the Communist International, which, however, rigidly excludes all elements not in complete accord with its fundamentals.

The unity which is illusory simply prepares for a separation just at the moment of crisis, as we have already witnessed in Germany, and as we witnessed in 1914 when the parties of the Second International chose to stand with their respective governments rather than with one another.

A change of our party tactics and propaganda according to the requirements of the revolutionary Socialist movement will make the party unsuitable as refuge for various reformist, petty bourgeois, sentimental elements which have hitherto dominated the party. The Left Wing is obnoxious to these elements, and the Left Wing will drive them out of the Socialist Party. Because for all losses of this sort there will be a thousand fold gain from the proletariat, which is rapidly developing revolutionary consciousness but which cannot be expected to regard with respect the programs and performances of a Socialist Party without proletarian consciousness.

\* \* \*

**Objection:** The Left Wing plays the game of the capitalist enemy by dividing the forces of Socialism on account of tactical matters.

**Answer:** As already stated, the Left Wing unites the forces of Socialism. It separates these forces from confusing and destructive admixtures, which leave no meaning to Socialism, and which leave no body of men and women ready to engage in any common action—except the game of capitalist politics (in order to make Capitalism more endurable).

The capitalist enemy can only discover in this process that there is real life and a real understanding of the revolutionary implications of the class struggle within the Socialist Party. Of course a Left Wing defeat might be highly acceptable to the capitalists, because it would show them that there is no revolutionary consciousness in the United States even among the members of the Party dedicated to the social revolution. But a Left Wing victory shows the capitalists that the Socialist Party means what it says about the class struggle and the social revolution.

The present opposition to the Left Wing

emphasizes how much the Party gained by casting off some of its social-patriots on account of the adoption of the St. Louis platform. The coming of the Labor Party and the Non-partisan League also is taken as a benefit to the Socialist Party in that it makes clear and emphatic the special mission of the Socialists (or Communists) as "the most advanced and resolute section of the working class parties of every country, that section which pushes forward all others; having over the great mass of the proletariat the advantage of clearly understanding the line of march, the conditions, and the ultimate general results of the proletarian movement."

Yet it was the very character of the Socialism which died with the world war of finance-Imperialism that it sought as adherents elements which never could be expected to meet the tests of the class war.

The Left Wing is honest, both in its statements about what Socialism is, and in its desires to have within the Socialist Party only true Socialists of proletarian revolutionary consciousness. There is mighty little consolation for the enemy in that sort of a transformation of the Socialist Party, because anybody can see those who oppose the Left Wing, and make this the basis for trying to split the Party, are potentially the most dangerous enemies of the working class at a time of crisis.

Besides there is not so much discrimination on the part of the capitalists as might be imagined. They are largely ignorant about the Socialist movement, and their class viewpoint keeps them ignorant of Socialism until the time of revolution. Meanwhile they pay little attention to our party discussions. There is bound to be a new direction to the Socialist movement along with tremendous historical changes, and this is our special and most important business. In these adjustments of our policies and tactics there are bound to be a few whose minds are beyond the grasp of a new historical situation, who are bound to insist on their old habits of thought and action as against anything. It is our business to take care of our party according to the right ideas about what it should say and do, and in this we can very well ignore what anybody says about our internal adjustments.

After all, we will only stand together under a crucial test to the extent that we really agree on fundamental party policies and methods.

\* \* \*

**Objection:** The Left Wing delights in revolutionary phrases leading nowhere except to idle shouting or outbreaks of violence.

**Answer:** The Left Wing insists upon the phrases which tell the truth about Socialism and the politics of the class struggle—and these phrases do, as a matter of fact, describe a revolutionary movement of the conscious proletariat to make an end to Capitalism.

In truth, however, it is the Reformists and Opportunists who play with phrases for their hypocritical purposes of alluring all sorts of persons through contrary interpretations. The Left Wing seeks the life meaning of all Socialist phrases, to convey life truths.

The program of the Communist International is a document of revolutionary Socialism, second only to the Communist Manifesto of 1848, and here is language with unambiguous meaning for any reader. The "statement of principles" of the National Executive Com-

mittee of the Socialist Party, issued May 29, is a conception of phrases made by jugglers using the phrases of Socialism to mean all things and nothing.

It must not be overlooked, also, that the mere expression of revolutionary phrases is at times the very essence of revolutionary Socialist action. An illustration which challenged the attention of all the world was the speech of Karl Liebknecht to a street meeting in Berlin calling upon German workers to rise against the Kaiser's government. Another illustration which commanded world-wide attention and which will find its place in the pages of universal history was the revolutionary expression of Eugene Debs in the Cleveland courtroom.

It is when the revolutionary phrases seize the mind of the masses and become translated into revolutionary action that the proletariat wins its triumphs. The critic who turns the revolutionary phrases with rare exceptions, is really the "Socialist" who is against the proletarian revolution.

The revolutionary phrases of Socialism have to do only with the mass power and mass action of the proletariat, and scorn the futile acts of individual terroristic violence which are unrelated to the organized proletarian movement. Nobody ever was or could be urged to individual acts of violence or sabotage through the propaganda of revolutionary Socialism.

\* \* \*

**Objection:** But the workers of the United States do not yet want a revolution.

**Answer:** That is the misfortune, because the United States is grievously in need of the Socialist revolution.

This is the master-phrase of the opposition to the Left Wing, calculated to work upon the nervous fears of the timid and cautious. And though timidity and caution have their complete justification, there is no justification whatever for making this objection to the Left Wing.

We say that the conditions for the social revolution are here: the high concentration of wealth and the advanced centralization of industry, to such a point that supreme control is now in the hands of the dozen chiefs of the central financial institutions; the existence of the class of permanent wage-workers as the overwhelming element of the population; the adaptation of the entire national life to the military adventures of extra-territorial finance-exploitation, with a gigantic expenditure of materials and life (this expenditure being in itself the most fruitful source of finance-exploitation); the complete negation of the parliamentary democracy by open control by the financial masters, as during the war and since, and as emphasized by the agreement of the different capitalist parties on all essential economic matters, such as tariffs, banking and currency, control of public utilities, suppression of effective labor organization, yielding up of former concessions to the petty bourgeoisie in the nature of anti-trust laws, taxation at point of consumption, with minimum of taxation at the point of net profits, and Monroe Doctrine insistence upon all of South and Central America as the special imperialistic monopoly of American finance-capital.

American Capitalism has reached the stage where its further progress carries with it an inevitable and terrible toll of destructiveness. On the side of the working class there can be

(Continued on page 11)